



NSW POLICE Challenges for Women in Leadership!

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I was wondering if we could start by having you write down the name of the most amazing person you have ever known (on a personal level), why they were exceptional in your mind and at least two of their qualities.

Let's see what the common theme is – I will bet that it is not academic genius?

Borrowed from the EG guru's – on a scale of 1 – 5 – very quickly rank your motivation – your openness to new ideas (no - not another speech from some token female about feminist leadership) and focus (this translates into thinking about leadership and not morning tea!)

Today I was asked to speak about “The Challenges for Women in Leadership.” My first response is that challenges are the same for all of us, complicated choices; career competition; family issues; new technology to learn; staff hassles; as well as the need to eat right (less salt); exercise; and still find time to be aware of wars; terrorism; politics or at least read the paper to pretend (women always read the sports sections so at least we know the scores – as for who the played the game and how – well I have skipped on number of occasions but I survived morning meetings after some big game).

I believe that the challenge for women and men leaders is combining and balancing:

- Your Goals
- Your Passion
- Your Actions
- Self Reflection



- And having fun

This list is off course not inclusive – one book lent to me for today was entitled the 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader, neatly listed in alphabetical order. From the exercise earlier this morning we could easily come up with 21 traits – alpha order – ranked – but I liked a line in the intro knowing how to lead is only half the battle. Understanding leadership and actually leading are two different activities...” (Dr John Maxwell). Let’s be honest, have you ever worked for a manager who you know for fact attended leadership or management training but whose behaviour appears anything but leadership? Do you wonder how could they have attended the course and, in your opinion, learned absolutely nothing? Memorising 21 traits is very easy, actually living them is far more difficult and demanding.

So, what will you take from today, apart from notes?

Significantly, every 21 traits had a section called “Reflecting on it,” challenging the reader to relate the traits to their own behaviours and attitudes. For example, just how good at communication (definitely one of the 21 indispensable ones) are you? How is this evident? How could it be better?

Law enforcement, amongst practitioners, is very practical field. We move through a series of set goals everyday. We adapt a means to an ends approach and the end is already defined, for example arrest a person; fix the computer; finish your policing degree essay; get on the Leadership Development Program; go for the next promotion; play the system - short term goals are clear and an inherent part of police culture.

Leaders set the goals for themselves, for their staff, for their command and for the organisation. Goals should be serious, if not they have little effect. Have you ever written down your goals? How seriously do we take performance management or LAC business planning?



I have always taken goal setting seriously, when I joined the Federal Police my goal was to specialise in law enforcement. I picked my niche and focused in terms of academic study and promotion opportunities. In the past 8 years I had the opportunity to build three teams (NCA national intelligence – NSW Police Strategic Intelligence + Project Management Unit). In each case our first steps were plan, plan, plan – goals, goals, goals. What team we wanted to be now, in 12 months and in three years. What people we needed. What people we wanted. What services / products we wanted to deliver? How we wanted the team to be regarded by the organisation and externally. How we would measure success. How we would reward success. How we would have fun, all documented and shared, aligned to personal goals and updated as we went. Now my goals are different:

- Learn about the private sector;
- Challenge my comfort zones;
- Work with some great companies;
- Get some great projects completed;
- Make lots of money (joke!!)

Goals require effort as well as the ability to wear the consequences. It has been observed there is a price one pays for changing goals when they are threatened - or we fail to take them seriously. Initially all will feel comfortable, and easy, but perhaps somewhat empty and lacking in meaning over time.

Leadership goal setting these days, however, is difficult and very complex. How do we ascertain which goals are worth it? Fifty years ago I would have felt perfectly justified in establishing the goals of staying home with my young daughter and building my family would be my focus. Today we have far more complex options.

Options are great, but many options create uncertainty of purpose this can eat away at our resolve. We often hear how it was easier for women when we had no choices, easier for fathers when they had no carer's leave (it was just not an



option so it never even crossed our minds). However our longing for simpler or less choices devalues the wonder of choice , as well as all the effort put into bringing about those choices (unions – governments – technology – feminist movements – civil rights – education and so on).

What to do? Leadership is about knowing what to do based on self-knowledge, resolving inner conflicts by identifying and discerning goals. Complexity means you will never know the full picture, especially in large organisations. Discernment means that's OK. Problem solving, option assessment and taking advantage of opportunities are important. I often get around difficult situations or people by transforming the issue into an opportunity. No money: lower the cost, identify other sources, exert pressure at multiple points, lobby and persevere with budget bids.

Difficult personalities: feed the persons trait, you cannot change it so work with it. If they hate reading then talk. If they hate computers give physical briefings. If they hate you then send someone else and if you're their manager – sack them (just kidding).

I have only been a consultant for a short time, I am currently working with ASIC – my last was with Bankstown City Council. However, you learn very quickly that your job is about facilitating decisions. The company I work for, ITPM has recently designed a four step blueprinting process that simply walks a client to their goal.

Implementing the goal is then a project. Our blueprint consultancy services are very much about facilitating leadership through identifying and resolving conflicts. People love clear, considered decisions.

The Russian Mihaly Csikszentmihayli from the Drucker School of Management in California (Flow 1992 – 2002) on “Class work on how to achieve happiness,” describes two ways of resolving inner conflict that stops leadership:



Firstly: Live a life of action & passion

Secondly: Self Reflection

The first point, action & passion is about our external world, family (best Dad award), policing (I will be Commissioner) and politics (I will beat John or Mark or both).

Great leaders set lifelong goals and act on them. The head of Hilton Hotels and long suffering father (Rick Hilton) of Paris observed “Success seems to be connected with action. Successful people keep moving. They make mistakes but they do not quit.” Paris obviously took this heart.

Often you will describe leaders as energetic; they seem to work incessantly (very annoying) at intense levels, energy and drive. Leaders trust their judgement and competence to a point where they respond and lead in situations with the spontaneity and passion of children. Passion is important and linked to energy; follow your passion instead of others Passion influences more than personality. Now Bill Gates does not appear as Mr Personality (well, I have not met him but he wears a lot of beige) but his passion for technology and philanthropy is clear. Passion scares, people describe you as too intense, too much. One sociologist observed;

“We are caught up at a particular stage in our national ethos in which we’re not only materialistic but worse than that; we are becoming emotionally dead as people. We don’t sing. We don’t dance. We don’t even commit crime with much enthusiasm.” I daresay some of you would disagree about crime, but passion is not simply something we did when we were 13.

Passion is also about fun and how much fun do you have at work? How much humour is in your Local Area Command? When we set up the Project Management Unit we had fun, how? Our mottos were “be nice to everyone” and the second from The Simpson’s was “Spread the blame,” staff would compete to



be the absolute nicest project coordinator, subject to team judgement. We had silly awards, team building that involved cliffs, water, leather belts, sailors or a combination of all the above. Team Meetings included a “new word, which rapidly de-generated!! We had fun. Virgin Company promotes fun, people having fun are usually more open, more creative, more inclusive, and work harder. I believe that fun is even more important in the often very sad and serious environment of policing. Definitely harder to achieve, hence the need.

Goals – action – passion – fun also transform people.

Reflection is the internal side, what we do within ourselves to be leaders. The other day I was listening to an Australian Philosopher in the USA, Peter Singer being interviewed about his new book entitled “The President of Good & Evil: The Ethics of George W. Bush.” I recall Singer stating that Bush was devoid of reflective thinking, he believed in what he said and did in the moment. Singer referred to the example of Bush being asked if there had been any mistakes in the war to date, would he have done anything differently? – Bush apparently replied no! Bush no doubt exemplifies a leader of action; Singer thinks he needs to work on his reflective capability.

Leadership is also about learning from experience, a realistic think about options & their consequences. Reflective thinking is god how did I go during that team meeting? How do I speak to my daughter? How can I do better – communicate more, perform better – this is also the basis for creativity – creative problem solving – initiative – internal drive and decisiveness.

The EQ guru’s argue that intelligent leaders and managers continually question themselves and people and systems around them. They have the courage to take risks, make mistakes, and try different approaches.



Connecting the two, self reflection and action with passion is not easy. Denying our awareness can result in superficiality, falseness and a mistrust of intuition, in fact a really horrible place.

- We want to avoid criticism
- We want to be accepted
- Passionate action stops.

Let's explore this downside.

It is significant from a policing perspective. A short term goal such as an emergency draws out our leadership capabilities. Or perhaps a game of football, the goals are clear. But long term leadership is, however, long term, a lifetime.

For women, leadership should not mean denying our femininity. I like being a woman and I like men. We need to share the strengths of being a woman with male and female peers and staff. Gelb, in his book "Discover your Genius," builds a 10 person dream team which includes Plato, Columbus, Shakespeare, Jefferson as well as Elizabeth the First. In 45 years she managed to unite England, defeat the Spanish Armada, build up the banks and establish the Anglican Church. This was way before the feminist movement imagine all those challenges to and all the criticisms.

She has been described as balance and power. She expressed traditional feminine traits of empathy, compassion, patience and openness to counsel together with boldness, decisiveness, ruthlessness and vision. Men and women can have both.

She also helped kick-start the many changes for women within in society, Germaine Greer, our expat revolutionist is an expert not just on abusing Andrew Denton's interview style but also on Elizabeth. As I said earlier, men and women now have the option to share and build on each others strengths acquired through our upbringing as well as our inherent sexual differences.



Are we doing this in our workplace now? In policing, empathy and compassion are paramount, as is decisiveness and boldness. Attaining a balance is definitely an option today, much easier than it was in the 1500's. We can do more to seize this opportunity, even the two words women and leaders differentiates perhaps in manner that does more harm than good. Balance is an option that we can benefit from.

People who possess the attributes (as well as the capability) for leadership need to be nurtured in organisations – that is why we are here today. However, you need to nurture yourselves:

- Define your Goals
- Be passionate
- Be energetic
- Think - Self Reflection
- And have Fun

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of that today.

By Sandra Bilson

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